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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

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SUBJECT: DAY OF CELEBRATION: AMBASSADOR INAUGURATES MOBA HOSPITAL REHABILITATED BY TAFT REFUGEE FUND

¶1. Summary: Ambassador inaugurated a hospital May 6 in Moba, Katanga, which was rehabilitated by the FY2008 Julia Taft Refugee Fund. Local officials and several hundred villagers from Moba welcomed the Ambassador with much fanfare. Following the inauguration ceremony, the delegation reviewed the rehabilitation work performed by NGO Africa Humanitarian Action. The delegation also visited local radio station RCMO and the newly refurbished Alfadjiri School. Providing essential services such as public health and education are vital to the successful reintegration of returning refugees. The hospital will have a significant impact on health services and improving the quality of life for those in the territory. End Summary.

¶2. Kalemie's District Administrator, Moba's Territorial Administrator, UNHCR's Head of Office in Moba, local dignitaries, and a huge crowd (estimated at 500 people) welcomed the arrival of Ambassador and PolOff to Moba on May 6 for the inauguration of the local hospital rehabilitated with FY2008 Taft Refugee Funds. Included in the crowd, a dancing group, singing choirs and a host of local officials greeted the delegation upon their arrival by MONUC helicopter in Moba, Katanga. A military review, receiving line, and an escorted tour of Moba followed the initial welcome.

¶3. After a short briefing at UNHCR's sub-office in Moba, the delegation proceeded to Moba Hospital for the inauguration ceremony. In front of a crowd of 250 people, the Ambassador officially inaugurated the rehabilitated hospital. The local population enthusiastically received his speech, which spoke of the importance of the only hospital in a region of 400,000 people and the need for the community to hold the local government responsible for maintaining the facilities in future years.

¶4. Following the ceremony, the delegation reviewed the rehabilitation work, which was performed by Africa Humanitarian Action with oversight by UNHCR's Moba sub-office. The delegation was impressed with the work that rehabilitated three buildings on the hospital compound. New ceilings, windows, doors, lights and sinks in the interior accompanied fresh paint and repaired roofs on the exterior.

¶5. After visiting the hospital, the delegation visited the local RCMO radio station with its new transmission equipment and new antennae provided by the NGO Search for Common Ground. The station can now broadcast messages within a 150 kilometer radius. In addition, the delegation visited the recently refurbished Alfadjiri School.

¶6. Comment: The arrival of the Ambassador and the inauguration of Moba Hospital was the biggest political and social event of the year in the territory and helped to send a powerful message to Congolese refugees that it is a good time to return. UNHCR is planning for the repatriation of several thousand Congolese refugees in Tanzania and Zambia to the area this year. Providing essential services such as public health and education are vital to the successful reintegration of returning refugees. The Julia Taft Refugee Fund played an integral part in helping to revitalize Moba and to provide a stable environment for refugee return. The hospital will have a significant impact on health services and improving the quality of life for those in the territory. End Comment.

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